**Examiner comments essay example 6**

**Grade awarded: E**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criterion A | 3 |
| Criterion B | 2 |
| Criterion C | 1 |
| Criterion D | 2 |
| Total | 8 |

This is a very poor essay. Although it uses the vocabulary of TOK in referring to areas of knowledge, ways of knowing and concepts such as “truth” and “validity”, there is very little evidence of any understanding. It does consistently retain “truth” as a focus, but the scope of the essay (truth in literature, mathematics, reasoning, natural sciences, human sciences, arts, history, emotions) is too broad to allow more than superficial discussion, and the attempt to make conceptual distinctions about different types of truth largely fails. Where discussion does take place, it is often either vague (for example, lines 32–33, line 114) or unclear (for example, line 53).

The essay uses potentially relevant quotes from Einstein, von Mises, Bonaparte et al, but by “parachuting” them in with no explanation they hinder rather than help understanding. While they do appear in the bibliography, they are not adequately referenced in the text or by footnotes.

**Criterion A: Understanding knowledge issues**

**Mark awarded: 3**

The essay is for the most part relevant, despite the weakness of the introduction in this respect. However, the links to areas of knowledge and ways of knowing provide little evidence of understanding beyond the rudimentary level (for example, lines 46–47, lines 60–61, lines 105–107). Where there does appear to be some understanding of a knowledge issue, the effect is sometimes undone by a confusion elsewhere (for example, in lines 73–74, “Centuries ago… it wasn’t” appears to suggest a distinction between truth and belief, but lines 22–24 “The difference… created the different truths” contradicts this).

**Criterion B: Knower’s perspective**

**Mark awarded: 2**

The essay relies too heavily on clichéd examples (for example, flat earth, 2 + 2 = 4) and Alchin’s text. This can be seen in the quotes, the emperor and dentist example (lines 55–57) and the lists of emotions (lines 120–133). That these are all from one text is less problematic than the very poor use of them; they are neither critically examined nor used as jumping-off points, but simply stated. Elsewhere, personal original examples could have provided evidence of personal engagement (for example, lines 81–88, 89–93, 108–113) but these opportunities were missed.

The essay is shaped to support the claim that “context is all” in all areas. (For example, “‘context is all’ in reasoning is relatively accurate” (line 54); “context is therefore a factor which human sciences depended on to reach a certain truth” (lines 92–93); “context is what makes art… art.” (line 99); “Context in history is all we have…” (lines 112–113); “truth is found in context…” (line 137)), except the sciences (lines 81–93) and, while this claim is very poorly supported, it does provide some evidence of independent thinking and limited personal engagement. There is, however, no real evidence of awareness of different perspectives.

**Criterion C: Quality of analysis of knowledge issues**

**Mark awarded: 1**

The essay largely describes without making coherent attempts at justification (for example, line 29, lines 39—41, lines 81–82). These few attempts at justification are not coherent (for example, lines 45–57 fail to make a relevant distinction between truth and validity (“the truth in reasoning is based upon the validity of the argument”) and, in the case of the emotions, the essay appears to lapse into pure description with no attempt at argument (for example, lines 119–133 where the emotions are simply listed). In this case, there is a gesture towards language and culture (line 134 “language barrier and difference”), but no development. There is very little evidence of awareness of counterclaims (for example, lines 108–109). The one piece of strong argument (lines 74–75) stands out but is not, in itself, sufficient to pull the essay up from this low score.

**Criterion D: Organization of ideas**

**Mark awarded: 2**

At the overall level, the essay does have a discernible structure; it tours areas of knowledge and ways of knowing. However, the essay is difficult to understand at several points (for example, lines 137–138) and the central concept of truth is not clarified. As a result the essay feels more like a ramble around the issues than a purposeful exploration. The poor organization is, in this case, more significant than the lack of citations (which is itself highly undesirable).